DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 048 CG 020 696

AUTHOR Sussman, Marvin B.; Pfeifer, Susan K.
TITLE Kin and Non Kin Intergenerational Connecting.
PUB DATE Aug 87
NOTE 25p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (37th, Chicago, IL, August 14-16, 1987).
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; Children; *Family Relationship; *Friendship; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Kinship; Loneliness; *Older Adults; Research Needs; *Social Isolation

ABSTRACT

The generation three and generation one connection of individuals not related by blood or marriage is predicted to increase in incidence in the coming decades. This will occur regardless of public policy or the concerns of family members who yearn for connectedness within the institutional family. These non-family nexi have the potential to provide participants with memorable experiences and knowledge within less than a lifetime frame, or they may be of long duration where individuals have a deep commitment to each other. The development of multiple "special" friendships between older adults, children, and youth may be the insurance for aloneness in old age and its devastating morbidic consequences. Geographic mobility, fertility rates, and dual worker families add up to a scarcity of family members who can connect with older family members for sociability, services, and other activities. There is a need for a conceptual approach which will provide understanding and meaning to the non-family dyadic generational connection, a harbinger of a normal event in the coming years. This development has begun by providing a contrast between family and non-family relationships on a number of connectedness variables. (ABL)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED293048

KIN AND NON KIN INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTING

by
Marvin B. Sussman, Ph.D.
Unidel Professor of Human Behavior
University of Delaware
and
Susan K. Pfeifer, M.S., Research Fellow
Dept. of Individual and Family Studies
University of Delaware

CG 020696

INTRODUCTION

The increasing unavailability of older adults within families as role models, providers of emotional support and transmitters of cultural practices, knowledge, beliefs, and values to younger generations is one of the tragedies of modern times. Elders, youth, and children need one another for the warmth, caring, love, affection, and knowledge each can provide the other.

Members of the different generations have difficulties in providing and obtaining such emotional support and service. First the increase in geographic mobility is decreasing family interaction. Historically the "long arm of the job" dominated the worker in societies undergoing industrialization and occupational specialization. The breadwinner located in an area where there was work. Corporate ideology favored this position and the relocation of workers was done with the best interests of the enterprise. According to this approach, "as the corporation prospers so does the worker." Individuals in need of employment or pursuit of new opportunities to improve themselves are strongly "encouraged" to pack up their family's belongings and move. This pattern of high geographical mobility continues to persist even though cooperatives, corporations and

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Marvin B. Sussman
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

enterprises, and other employers are trying to accommodate the family's need to maintain their roots in a community. The consequence of relocation is a marked separation of children and youth from older adults, their grandparents, grand aunts, and grand uncles and other collateral relatives. While Shanas in one study found that over 75% of individuals in the United States live within a 30 to 40 minute car ride from a relative, the number of available close or distant family members may be sufficient to handle crises such as illness or divorce, and have visits on holidays or birthdays.[1] They are insufficient to provide the emotional support, caring, love, intimacy and solidarity all human beings need on a sustained basis in order to experience some quality of life. Second, there are fewer grandchildren available for grandparents because of the lowered fertility rate since World War II in the United States and European industrialized societies. This reduction in the number of children born in conjunction with the increasing number of older adults surviving into their 80's and 90's because of advances in medical technology indicates the need and the potential burden on families in maintaining connections between the generations.

A related phenomenon which affects generational connecting and caregiving is the emergence of various forms of nuclear families. Demographers, who have largely ignored this development, are currently readjusting their analytic approaches to account for the behavior of families who are experiencing life course events such as divorce, remarriage, children leaving home, widowhood, and retirement, with the outcome being a family form at variance with the intact nuclear family of procreation.

Our concern is the need to explore new family forms for the "new" old, those who will be 65 years and older in the decades beginning in 2010. In the United States in the year 2050 one of every four persons will be age 65 or over.[2] This is becoming a matter of public and social policy. Extensive discussions are being held among gerontologists, government officials, elites, and those of middle age on the future arrangements for the care and nurturance of the "new" elderly in the 21st century. If birthquakes or radical shifts in population policies occur within the next ten years in industrialized nations, an unlikely fertility phenomenon, the "search" for a relative, will be less intense, and grandchildren may be enticed to care for their grandparents. A more conservative scenario, however, is to assume slight shifts in fertility patterns away from zero population growth. The continuous need will be to find new forms of connecting, vis a vis relationships not bound by blood ties or marriage, which are characteristic of functioning families.

Intergenerational exchange and cooperation is needed both within and outside of the family. The benefits of such activities are:

1. The provision of an opportunity for the development of meaningful roles and needed services for individuals of all age groups.
2. The possible diminution of the potential for conflict between generations.
3. The creation of situations that may enable elders to cultivate new, meaningful relationships in addition to developing a better understanding and appreciation of the problems of youth.
4. The addition of direct and indirect resources to public and volunteer agencies serving both elders and youth.

5. The enhancement of the awareness and understanding of youth concerning the aging process.
6. The exposure of youth to a holistic view of life.
7. The development of exchanges between young and old: the young receive primarily the wisdom, experience, and knowledge of the long lived; the elders receive the warmth, spontaneity, caring, and friendship children and youth have in abundance.

To reap these benefits and to overcome the loss or eroding of the conveyance belt of knowledge, practices, beliefs, and values within families from the grandparent to the grandchild generation an alternative structure is required. Modern conditions of life have not influenced the basic need for generational bonding; it is present in everyday life. Altered are the ways such needs are fulfilled.

One alternative is to link older adults with young children regardless of their respective mental or physical conditions. Such connecting can be accomplished in structured or informal activities. Such linkages can substitute or complement existing intergenerational family connections. The basic assumption is that as a consequence of this bonding children will improve their coping skills, increase their self-esteem, develop an understanding of the aging process, obtain new friends, and learn of the past-- its lifeways, skills, and knowledge. Older adults, in turn, will flourish in their roles as teachers and guides, and obtain in some measure the warmth, love, and care basic to human life and survival. Together children and elder adults can help each other cope with life's stresses.

AIM

Proposed is a new conceptualization of the intergenerational dyadic relationship. The following represents the genesis of a theoretical formulation of intergenerational connections.

The procedure adopted is to examine generational continuity within the family, that which is created by blood or marriage; and continuity which exists outside of the family and kinship system and is the result of voluntary acts. This comparative approach focused on internal versus external family generational continuity, has been largely unexplored. Most analyses of generational continuity and solidarity are those of interaction and exchange within the family and network created by marriage or blood lines.

BONDING MECHANISM OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Within families generational continuity is obligatory. It is preordained and prescripted. It involves the transfer of status and equity within blood lines and such transfers are steeped in history. Illegitimacy is not well received or respected and, in fact, battles for empires have fought over this issue, in an effort to place the legitimate child or grandchild on the throne.

In non-family generational continuity, where a dyadic relationship is formed, the association is nonobligational. The bond is not prescripted but is formed after appropriate introductions are made. What develops is spontaneous. In time the responsibilities of the relationship may become obligatory, but the extent and intensity of involvement depends upon the wishes and desires of the individuals. Some bondings outside the family are

a consequence of fortuitous circumstances or because of serendipity. Because a person is not forced into such a relationship, it may be discontinued at anytime.

CULTURAL EXPECTATIONS

Strong cultural expectations buttress the obligations of generational continuity within families. While cultural prescriptions do not force family members to maintain continuity over generational time, most do so. There are no expectations that non-kin members of the older and younger generations will form dyadic relationships. If the potential exists for any expectations they are dulled by ageism.

The expectation to inherit differentiate the family and non-family generational connectors. This inheritance is a possible and even a probable occurrence if the non-family relationships become continuous, deep and meaningful. In inheritance studies one finding is that those persons who assume caretaker roles may be given a fair share of the inheritance left by a testator.[3] The notion of distributive justice is invoked. Heirs and legatees who would inherit under the law of intestacy agreed to convey a larger share to that person, usually a child who has taken on major responsibility for providing care for the aged family member. It is likely that similar designations of family equity, usually distributed along generational lines may be given to members of the non-family dyads who provide such care for the older adult in her or his declining years.

PATTERNS OF INTERACTION

As part of the repertoire of parenting skills, parents teach their children how to act towards elders, especially their grandparents. Parents are controllers of the interaction of their children with other family relatives and kin. Those who are fearful of the potential loss of control over their children, may determine the limits of contact a child may have with a grandparent. Such a practice has become a common occurrence and is supported by law and policy which tend to favor parental control over children and recognize that grandparents have a moral but not legal right to see their grandchildren.[4] Currently, there is a slight shift in this particular legal position taken by the courts in the United States. Increasingly, the doctrine of the best interest of the child is being used in making determinations, especially where divorce has occurred, as to whether grandparents or grandchildren should interact with one another based upon the latter's best interest. Even with these dents in the long standing tradition of parental control, it is reasonable to state that whether a child sees a grandparent is determined not by the essence of this important and intrinsic bond, but whether it suits the parents, who are acting out their own scenario within the family. In some instances, the child becomes the pawn in the drama of family dynamics and may be denied either the potential or the experience of discovering for herself or himself whether it is worthwhile to invest time and energy in a grandparent relationship.

The intergenerational dyadic relationship created outside of the family bonded by marriage or blood is high dissimilar to what has been described. The elder, child or youth only rely upon adults to make the initial connection and to some degree set the permissive limits of the

relationship. As the relationship grows and matures, it creates a dynamism of its own with the participants establishing their rules for interaction; thus diminishing the dependence on the middle generation. While, initially at least, the patterns of interaction follow existing traditions and values which govern such relationships within the family, given the absence of the third party, there is an increasing opportunity to develop new paradigms to govern such relationships. The new paradigms are free to operate in modes, similar to those one finds among peers and one's own cohort, recognizing the role of self determination and control. Another component of these paradigms is the internalization of the commonality and sanctity of such intergenerational connections into one's value system.

ESTABLISHED PATTERNS OF CONNECTING

Within families intergenerational continuity may be on a regular or frequent basis depending upon the location of family members. With a pattern of neo local residence where children do not live in the households of their parents and increasingly move away from the traditional neighborhood, such distancing may limit generational contacts to telephone calls and visits on ceremonial occasions such as funerals, weddings, birthdays, as well as the traditional holidays of Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. The frequency of intergenerational interaction is dependent upon the location and type of relationships built over a long period of time. There is some expectation that these patterns will prevail in the foreseeable future.

In contrast, where intergenerational dyadic connections are established outside the family, the choice of time, frequency, and place of

interaction is optional. Individuals decide what is most appropriate for them. It is a mutually derived arrangement entered into initially as a contract, which in time, may become traditionalized and follow some of the same patterns of generational connecting within families.

ROLE POSITION OF INTERGENERATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

Familial Intergenerational relationships have a long and revered history where grandfather or great grandfather is the patriarch and is to be respected and honored by all others, especially grandchildren. The model is one of superordinate-subordinate established over historic time. It is based upon the rationale that those who are experienced and have lived long enough to survive the travails of life should be honored and rewarded for their accomplishments; besides they have power because of control over resources whose distribution is through the inheritance system.

The middle generation of parents enhances this superordinate-subordinate posture by its nurturing and early socialization of the young to the appropriate subordinate position in the family generational continuum. Parents have a high control over the child's contacts with grandparents when there is great distance between the households.

The issue for the dyadic relationship between the elder and the child or the youth is markedly different. Once the relationship is formed through appropriate introduction and negotiation, and with the permission of the middle aged adult it has the potential for becoming more equitous than the subordinate-superordinate relationship of the traditional grandparent-child dyad. Because of age differences and societal held values regarding children/youth and the elderly, there are some expectations of positioning

in the relationship. One can foresee, however, that where both participants are sufficiently rewarded in the relationship, the role set will be one of complementarity rather than domination. The ever present understanding of the available option to exit from an unsatisfactory relationship entered into voluntarily may promote negotiation and develop understanding. In contrast, one cannot easily exit from the family and kin constellation of relationships.

DURATION OF THE RELATIONSHIP

Generational continuity within families is a birth to death experience. One is born into a generationally linked family in which the patterns of connecting are well defined and built into familial as well as societal traditions. Although these patterns may not be experienced by all individuals, the potential does exist.

In contrast, when non-family generational connections are formed, their duration is unknown. As indicated previously, individuals can choose to terminate such relationships, and are under no tradition or legal percept to maintain such bonds. While it is a voluntary commitment, since the individuals choose to participate in a variety of activities and modes, it may become a difficult bond to break.

For example, it is reported by those who have studied cohabitation that the breakup of a relationship where two people have cohabitated, has far more severe psychological problems such as depression, than when breakup occurs of a legally married couple. The explanations of this difference are interpretative at best but seem to have logic. The pair that creates a relationship based upon certain premises and principles that they have

devised in their own contract, may experience a greater loss of their failure than the traditionally married couple, where people often enter into such marriages as a matter of course because they are of marriageable age. Marrieds may not have put into the development of their relationship the meaning which the cohabitating couple has given to it. Also, it is far easier for married people who are divorcing to get into support networks. In more recent years, there has been a development of these networks on a institutional level, whereas cohabitating couples do not have such networks readily available.

This note on cohabitation is to indicate that we often underestimate the importance of voluntary commitments and the consequences of failure for these individuals. We are saying, in effect, that the dyadic structure being developed by older adults with children/youth may turn out to be far stronger in their permanency than many grandparent-grandchild relationships. This is an issue that needs careful investigation.

SITUATIONS INVOLVING ELDER CARE

In spite of the extensive development of institutionalized systems for the care of the ill and dependent, especially the elderly, the family is the main source of caretaking and it is to them that the burden is given. In the absence of grown children, children's unwillingness to take care for an aging parent, or the family's inability to do so because of gainful employment, situations may arise calling for the grandchild to be the principle caregiver. This may create an additional problem for the grandparent/grandchild relationship within a family that may be troubled by the interference and/or mediation of the middle generation. Unless there is

a deepened and compassionate relationship between grandchildren and grandparents during the grandparents' independent years, it is unlikely that the grandchild will provide such care; and if given this burden could perform it inadequately or even unkindly.

Although the non-family dyadic connection does not have any expectation of care and burden, it is possible, and in some cases likely, that the younger person may assume such care of the elder in his/her later years. One could hypothesize that such deepened and compassioned bonds may go on for a lifetime and the younger person may assume the role of a surrogate grandchild. If such occurs, it is completely voluntary and can be considered only obligatory if the young person in the relationship begins to feel the need to provide such care. The obligation then becomes self imposed, and does not come into being because of familial and societal traditions and expectations.

COMMUNICATION MODES

Kinship and family rules govern forms and types of communication between grandparents and grandchildren. There is a high emotional component to such communication which is set within the context of role expectations involving the family's status and position within society. There may be taboo topics where grandparents and grandchildren may be wary to get into issues which will antagonize the parents, the middle generation.

The non-family dyad of elder and young person can select any issue, interest, or subject to discuss and these can omit family concerns. The compelling emotional component of family relationships is absent. Where such discussions occur they are likely to be introspective and therapeutic

similar to exchanges and results which occur between best friends. The discourse is likely to be more reciprocal than unidirectional.

NUMBER OF POSSIBLE INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

Within family and kin lines the number of possible grandparent and great grandparent connections is limited by such factors as the descent system, morbidity rates and geographical propinquity in the society. In a multilineal descent system where one claims lineage from either side of the family one has four grandparents and eight great grandparents. Where divorce and remarriage occurs one acquires with the new family additional grandparents.

Non family generational dyads are not limited in the number of grandparents and grandchildren relationships. Theoretically they can have as many as they desire. Wholesale adoption is a possibility. In some retirement homes the elders "adopt" one or two as grandchildren and these few have multiple "everyday" grandparents.

ECONOMICS

There is a familial expectation deeply rooted in most cultures that payment for services provided to family members does not follow the rules of the market place. Payment for services as in the commercial modal is unacceptable. Gifts, services, and even the transfer of equities, even money, does occur. These exchanges are readily accepted as appropriate and are even expected. Grandparents may even hire their grandchildren to work for them at a rate or fixed amount of money. The fact remains, however,

that it is not a familial or kin expectation. A work arrangement must be voluntarily entered into.

The situation for non-family generational dyads has similar conditions of low expectancy of payment for services provided among friends. Lacking an historical tradition older adults and youth can more readily enter into an "economic" contract for services rendered as is done in the "Rent a Kid" program in the United States. Youth do chores for elders for which they are paid and many use this option to develop a long term and meaningful relationship with their benefactor.

Gifting is the likely process in these newly formed relationships where the exchanges are more valued for their symbolic significance than the cash value placed on each exchange.

RESEARCH ON NON FAMILY GENERATIONAL CONNECTING

Since September, 1982, with a grant from the W.T. Grant Foundation, we have been collecting, synthesizing, and describing programs in the United States and Canada which involve older persons, children, and youth who are not related by blood or marriage. We have solicited information from approximately 600 national organizations; 250 professional colleagues; and screened over 500 published reports from scholarly journals. We identified 38 exemplary projects involving children, youth, and older adults. These included day care, Adopt-A-Grandparent, education, and service programs. Descriptions of these programs were set into a booklet form and disseminated to agencies, institutions and communities. It is our expectation that this information, which included information on expenditures of time, energy, and

money of these programs, would encourage policy and program changes in the functions of human service organizations and institutions.*

A second undertaking was an evaluation of the consequences of intergenerational connectedness between elderly adults in a retirement home (Messiah Village, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.) and preschoolers whose nursery school was physically located at the home. Among the many findings was that each elderly respondent in a well developed and highly meaningful "special friend" relationship incorporated this connecting into their repertoire of activities which enhanced their physical and mental well being, and continued their autonomy, mobility and independence. The retirement and day care staff reported the need to expand the program of matching older adults with preschoolers for the intellectual stimulation, affection, nurturance, and caring generated by this program for all participants including the severely impaired.

Turning to research just completed with funding from the American Association of Retired Persons Andrus Foundation, older adults and youth who were not related by blood or marriage were connected in activities that were designed to maximize the development of meaningful relationships between the generations. The older adults and youth were unknown to another until brought together. The interest of the Boy Scout and 4H organizations in the Delaware/Maryland area bordering Wilmington in the United States was solicited. They responded enthusiastically and saw the possibilities of incorporating this program into their regular activities as well as the potential for future adoption nationwide.

* A copy of these final reports are available upon request.

Ten scout and 4H groups participated in this study. The older adults who participated came from three different settings: the retirement home; senior center; and neighborhood where they lived independently.

The program of activities consisted of a minimum of six one to three hour sessions over a period of two months. Focussed activities were systematically introduced each time to enhance interaction, learning, and the development of trusting interpersonal relationships between youth and older adults.

Youth and older adults paired spontaneously. No one was assigned to another person, although in some cases, scout, 4H and agency personnel may have made suggestions while introducing the older adults and youth to one another. Some youth developed a "special friend" relationship with an older adult and continued their visits and exchanges well after the project was completed.

The success of this program was measured in several ways. Elders who participated in the six to eight activity sequence and their controls were tested before and after the completion of the program regarding changes in life satisfaction, self esteem, and morale. Youth were given instruments to measure changes in self concept and attitudes toward aging and the aged. Changes in self concept, morals, and attitudes which did occur from the time before and after the program were not statistically significant.

We can explain the non-significance of this aspect of the research study in the usual manner, e.g., faulty measurement; faulty instruments; faulty design; faulty time before and after; and faulty instrument administrators. A more appropriate explanation may lie in the error of using a positivist and naturalistic research model. Our assumptions

regarding the rationality of human beings and the predictability of their behavior may have been at fault. We likened their behavior to those of molecules in a test tube and with this paradigm our study was designed.

The experience stimulated for me the revival of an old paradigm in the social sciences and humanities, namely the need to focus on interpretation of that which is observed about society, its institutions, groups, and individuals. This speaks to Daniel Bell's notion of the need to redirect modern thought away from a heightened positivism to an intensive analysis of cases and their interpretation. In this mode there is an awakening of creativity emanating from the right side of the brain in explaining observable phenomena. The process of looking at component parts to obtain a holistic explanation will reduce the artificiality of objectivism.

Fortunately, varied strategies of information gathering were used. There is the set of measures obtained by intensive interviews with youth leaders and agency staff based on direct observation of youth-elder activities. Here we found that attitudes of youth toward the elderly were changing. One of the leaders reported:

> "I thought there would be some changes in the attitudes in the pre and the post tests. The change in the answers that I noticed were: if you see old people do you think they are mean or grumpy? In the beginning there were some children that said yes. That attitude did change. They did not feel that they were so mean and grouchy. There was one woman at the nursing home who was confused and if the children would walk by she would pinch and grab them. She would insist on giving them things, and if they had something she insisted on them giving it to her. In the beginning the children were terrified of her

and they would walk a good two feet away from her, towards the end they really did not even care. They were less frightened of the elders at the end. One of the patients was blind. A couple of the children became real close to her because she was mentally on the ball, but her only physical handicap was her blindness."

Another adult reported "that the excitement of watching the intergenerational activities stemmed from the fact that the children looked beyond the physical aspects of each older person and got to know the person inside."

A third report was given by a scout leader that in the presence of the elders "the kids took an about face. They weren't my kids anymore. They were total strangers. They weren't the kids that were screaming and hollering. All of a sudden they found a buddy--a partner--and they enjoyed it and they had a keen interest in them. They seemed to be on the same frequency."

The beginnings of long time friendships were in the making according to this staff member's report:

"In the beginning the cub scouts sat on one side of the room and the senior citizens on the other. They remained totally separated for the first two meetings. Then we decided to play bingo. The children were not told who to sit with but were allowed to choose their partners. Someone wanted to sit with the woman who couldn't see. There was an elder who couldn't hear, so one of the boys changed his place and went over and sat with her. It seemed the children automatically sat next to someone to help them. From then on, the change occurred. No more of the boys on one side of the room and all the wheelchairs lined up

on the other side of the room. They were all mingling. Even some of the younger ones climbed up on the elders' laps. There were a lot of smaller children accompanying parents who brought the cub scouts to the program. Some of them would just walk over and climb up on the wheelchair. The older folks loved it."

In response to the question should this program be continued, one leader said:

"I would say yes. Most of the residents in a nursing home don't have family, don't have the contact of the family that they really need and enjoy and they really enjoyed seeing these kids. It was something that they looked forward to every week. They would be asking me when are you coming back? At one point, we had to wait about a 10 day difference between the 2 programs. That long? Another person stated "I think this program builds a lot of self esteem and makes the participants feel good about themselves." A nursing home director said the following: "When you get people into a nursing home, they find out that it really isn't a bad place after all. Hopefully this program will eliminate a lot of bad feelings people have about nursing homes. I think the older folks suffer because of it. As far as the scouts go--I would like to see the program continue because I think one of the main objectives of the scouting program is to produce well rounded kids--individuals. Getting old is part of life and death and I think that should be included."

Systematic analysis of case data support the view that the enhancement of the quality of life results for youth and elders as a consequence of participating in the program. The majority of youth made a connection with

an elder who became a "special friend." For these individuals there may be a new form of grandparent-grandchild relationship outside of the bond created by blood ties and marriage. If this relationship does not emerge as a new family form in the 21st century it will be a strong bond providing much needed continuity of experience, knowledge, and emotional support and service over generational time.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

Required is a policy of options for generational connecting within and outside of marriage, family and kin lines. This policy would be particularly germane for members of generations 3 and 1 who are or will not be connected within family and kin networks.

The solidification of bonds between non-related by blood or marriage generational dyads may produce, if not havoc, at least discontinuities in the present system of equity transfers and inheritance. The incidence of such transfers may increase inter vivos, i.e., during the lifetime of the older adult. The legality of such transfers is still in question. There may be more court battles over wills and family contacts.

A government sponsored social policy of nondiscrimination against non-family connections may result in court decisions supporting this policy. This should accelerate the potential and endemic conflict between kin and non kin who claim legal, moral, emotional, and service connections with the elderly person.

Current practices related to familial responsibility may be altered if recognition is given to these non-family connections. A social policy of "human abundance" which supports generational family connections and those

developed voluntarily will meet the human interaction and service needs of children, youth, and older adults in the 21st century.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The generation 3 and generation 1 connection of individuals not related by blood or marriage is predicted to increase in incidence in the coming decades. This will occur regardless of public policy or the concerns of family members who yearn for connectedness within the institutional family. Such dyadic associations began with a set of assumptions, understandings and procedures very different from those ensconced within family and kin networks. Those non-family nexi have the potential to become "like flesh and blood generational families," long in duration where individuals have a deep commitment to each other. Other formations may be for shorter periods of time providing the participants with memorable experiences, resources, associations, knowledge, skills, caring, affection and intimacy within a less than lifetime frame. The development of multiple "special" friendships between older adults, children and youth may be the insurance for aloneness in old age, and its devastating morbidic consequences.

Support to these notions is the unfolding of the demographic story briefly mentioned and resonated in detail in other writings. The fertility picture encourages the thought that the "new" elderly in 2010 will be in search of a child or grandchild. Patterns of geographic mobility which for most citizens is based on the job and the opportunity to improve one's socioeconomic status indicate the diminution of available propinquitous kin and the possibility of every day generational activity. A related issue is

the dramatic increase in the incidence of dual work families, a later 20th century phenomenon, which means the loss of at least one family member as networker, kinkeeper, and caretaker. These add up to the scarcity of available family members who can connect with older family members for sociability, services, and other activities.

Finally, dyadic generational connecting of non-blood or marriage related individuals, has been given little heed by social scientists. The thrust of their efforts in theorizing and empirical work is within the family and kin systems. The reasons for this omission in the face of realities is difficult to find. It may be because we look at phenomenon through tunneled vision colored glasses and the "ahah"--translated means "yes indeed," "of course," "it is so obvious"--comes to fruition in no rational manner.

There is a need for a conceptual approach which will provide understanding and meaning to the non-family dyadic generational connection, a harbinger of a normal event in the coming years. This development has begun by providing a contrast between family and non-family relationships on a number of connectedness variables. This work will continue using a revised paradigm of the social sciences where focus is on observation of social phenomena, looking at the component parts in order to obtain a holistic explanation. This approach speaks to Daniel Bell's notion of the artificality of objectivism and heightened positivism so characteristic in our discipline where the objects of our scrutiny are viewed with an unbelievable rationality and predictability in behavior in keeping with a natural science research model. Such molecule designation and categorization of human behaviors eludes being concerned with the feelings

of reflective human beings. This latter is a critical concern. The creative intention is to use a mode of conceptualization and analysis which will make greater use of the right brain in proposing explanations of observable non-family generational phenomena and their variations. You are invited to join in this endeavor.

ENDNOTES

1. Shanas, E., 1979. Social myth as hypothesis: The case of the family relations of old people, The Gerontologist, 19:1-9.

2. Bureau of the Census, Series P-25, No. 922 (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 1982).

3. Sussman, M.B., Cates, J.N., and Smith, D.T., 1979. The Family and Inheritance, New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

4. Burgess Award: Law and legal systems: The family connection. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 9-21, (Feb.) 1983.